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DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/AND AND NEA/IRAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/05/2016
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [UN](#) [BO](#) [EC](#)
SUBJECT: GOE AMBIVALENT ON IRAN-VENEZUELA RELATIONS

REF: STATE 61378

Classified By: PolOff Erik Martini for reasons 1.4 (B&D)

¶1. (C) PolOff conveyed RefTel points on May 15 to MFA Director General for Multilateral Affairs, Lourdes Puma. After listening to our views, Puma asserted that "it is not Ecuador's way to insert itself into the affairs of other sovereign nations and tell them with whom they should be friends." Puma added that Venezuela is a sovereign Andean country with which Ecuador has a broad and historically friendly relationship.

¶2. (C) Asked whether the GOE would consider voicing concerns about Iran and Venezuela in international fora or to other friendly countries, Puma replied that Ecuador would never comment on other countries' policies except when those policies affected Ecuador's interests. Venezuela's relations with Iran do not fall in that category, she insisted.

¶3. (SBU) Iran's pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability, however, is indeed an issue of concern to the GOE, according to Puma. As a member of the IAEA governing board, the GOE would continue to support IAEA findings and UN resolutions to curb Iran's nuclear weapons ambitions. Puma also said there were no concrete plans for an Iranian Embassy in Ecuador, as had been rumored.

¶4. (C) Comment: Given the Correa government's deepening relationship with Venezuela, Puma's negative response was predictable. Judging from this normally circumspect MFA official's assertiveness on this issue, the GOE is very unlikely to join any efforts to curb Venezuela's relationship with Iran. We are more hopeful, however, that the concerns we shared about this issue may cause the GOE to think twice before deepening its own relations with Iran.
JEWELL